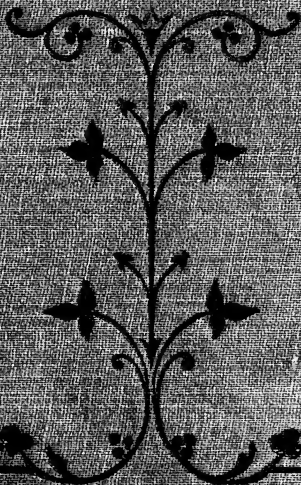


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“But where is your mother, Nelly? I want to speak to her

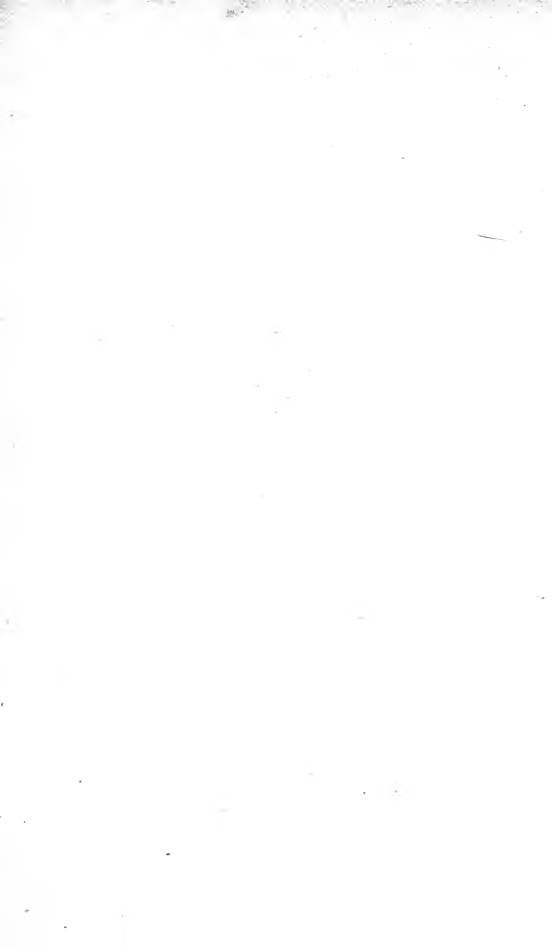
A MONTH
AT
ASHFIELD FARM;

OR,

ELLEN AND ROBERT'S FIRST
JOURNEY FROM HOME.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, PRINTED IN COLOURS
BY KRONHEIM.*

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ASHFIELD FARM.



CHAPTER I.

HOPE.

IN a narrow court, which was entered by an archway from a small and dirty street, in a large manufacturing town, stood a poor-looking house, at the door of which a man, dressed like a railway porter, stopped and knocked. Nobody came to open the door, so, after waiting a minute, he walked in.

“Oh, there is somebody at home, I see,” said he, cheerfully; “I thought you were all gone.”

“Please, Uncle George, I did say ‘come in,’ but you did not hear me,” said a little girl who was sitting on a stool near the fire.

“No, I should think not,” said her uncle,

laughing; "for who could hear such a little, weak voice as that through the door; why it is not much louder than a mouse's squeak. But where is your mother, Nelly? I want to speak to her." And Uncle George sat down on a chair near the little girl. "And how do you and Bob do?" added he, looking at a boy rather older than the girl, who was sitting on another stool near the fire, resting his head upon the seat of a chair.

"We are both better, thank you, uncle," said Nelly, "but baby is so cross, and Tommy, too—poor mother is nearly worried to death with them. I'll call her, she's only upstairs."

"Yes, do," said Uncle George, "for I have not long to stay."

Ellen—for I suppose you have found out that was the little girl's real name—went to the bottom of the stairs and called to tell her mother that Uncle George was come, and in a minute or two there was the sound of some one coming down stairs. But the footsteps stopped, and a cross, whining little voice was

heard, saying, "No, no, Mammy," which made little Nelly leave her uncle's knee, against which she had been leaning, and go to the bottom of the stairs again.

"Here, come up and bring Tommy down," said her mother's voice; "I can't wait for him, and he is as cross as two sticks."

So Nelly went up-stairs, and her mother came down with her baby in her arms; and, after some coaxing, Ellen got Tommy down, too, by a step or two at a time.

Mrs. Cooper, for that was the name of Ellen and Robert's mother, looked very much worn and tired, and seemed glad to sit down on the chair which her brother set for her.

"Well, George," she said, "I'm glad to see you; we thought you'd forgot us."

"Not a bit of it," answered George; but I have been away for a week or two down the line at Tradly station. One of the porters there has been ill, and I went to take his place, and while I was there, who should come to the station one day but our Susan, and when she saw me she began to ask all sorts

of questions about you and all the rest. And when I told her what a bad time you'd had with the fever, and how weak and ill some of you were still, she told me to give you her love, and say how glad she should be to have two of the children for a month's run in the country to set them up again."

Ellen and Robert looked at each other with pleased faces as their uncle said this; but they looked very grave again when their mother said, with a sigh, "That's very kind of Susan, but I doubt we can't manage it; it costs so much, you see, to get that far."

"Oh, if that's all," said George, "we'll manage that. Look here, this is what I thought: I'm going down there again the end of this week, and the station-master will give me a pass for these two chits, I know. I suppose they'd be the two to go? And then Sue said, if I'd let her know, she'd bring her trap and meet them at Tradly, so that would cost you nothing, you see.

They've got a beautiful trap of their own, ye see—they're well off."

"Well, I must think about it, and see what the father says," said his sister. "Certainly, it would be a fine thing for the children, for they look wretchedly pulled down."

"Oh, mother, do let us go, do let us go," cried Ellen and Robert together; "please let us go."

"We'll see, we'll see," answered she; but they were not quite satisfied with the look of her face, which seemed as if she saw some great difficulty in the way.

"You see, George," she said, after thinking a minute, "I should like to send them to Susan looking decent, and with this long time of illness I haven't been able to look to their things so well. But we'll see what can be done, and talk to father about it."

"Very well," said George, jumping up, "I must be off now, but I'll look in again to-morrow night and hear what you say, and then I can write to Susan. Good-bye Robert and Nelly, mind you are ready to go with me

next week;" and so saying, away went Uncle George.

Robert and Ellen both started up directly he was gone, and began to beg and entreat their mother to let them go to their aunt's. At first she did not take much notice of what they said, but sat as if she was thinking very much about something else; so that Ellen got cross, and, pulling her mother's gown, she said, "It will be very unkind of you, mother, if you don't."

Her mother turned round to her and said, "Ellen!" in a tone of voice that always made Ellen ashamed of herself; and she hung down her head now, and asked no more. But Robert was not so soon quieted.

"But, mother, *why* won't you let us go," persisted he, "I'm sure you might."

"Father and I are the best judges about that, Robert," said his mother; "and you may be quite sure that if we can manage it we shall. I'm sure," she added, "I shall be very glad to have you both well again, for you are very cross and troublesome now."

Here, Ellen, you take baby a bit; and Robert, you try and amuse Tommy, while I go and take a look at your clothes, and see what can be done."

Ellen took baby directly, without saying anything, and going back to her little stool did all she could to please her; but she was very restless, and poor Ellen's arms, which were not strong, soon got tired of holding her and moving her about, but she was so sorry for having been cross to her mother that she would have gone on nursing the little thing till her arms dropped off, rather than have owned that she was tired. But at last she remembered she could lay her in the cradle and play with her there, which she did, and baby was soon crowing with delight, as Ellen peeped up and down at her over the side of the cradle.

All this time, poor little Tommy was sitting on the floor, fretting, for Robert, instead of doing as his mother told him, went back to his old place and laid down his head on the chair again. Ellen looked up several times

at Tommy, and then at Robert, and at last she said: "Robert, won't you play with Tommy? Mother told you to."

"No," said Robert, "I shan't; I've got the headache."

"You always have the headache when mother wants you to do anything, I think," answered Ellen, rather sharply; but when she looked at Robert's pale face—he had had the fever worse than she had—she felt sorry, and added, more gently, "do, Robert, dear; I think, perhaps, playing with Tommy would do your head good."

At first Robert did not seem to think so, but presently he took up a book that had been given to him, and went and sat down by Tommy on the floor to show him the pictures, and in a few minutes they were both very happy, and Robert seemed quite to have forgotten all about his headache.

CHAPTER II.

ANTICIPATION.

WHEN their father and their two elder brothers came home at night from the factories where they worked, the two children listened anxiously to hear if their mother would say anything to their father about Uncle George's visit, but they only heard her tell him that her brother had been to see her, and she said nothing then about the invitation to Ellen and Robert, which made them feel rather disappointed, and, I am sorry to say, cross, with their good mother, as little children sometimes are, because they cannot understand the reasons that make their parents do what they do not like.

It really was kindness to the children that made Mrs. Cooper put off talking to her husband till they were in bed. She thought it would be better for him to talk it over quietly with her, for she knew that

at first he would say no, as she had ; and she wished to spare the children the disappointment of hearing their father say so, because she hoped to persuade him that it could be managed, as she now thought it might. Her greatest trouble was that Robert had no good clothes, and those he was wearing every day were very shabby ; but when Sam, the eldest boy, heard her say so, he said he thought he had some trousers, and a jacket, too, that would cut smaller for Robert ; and when his mother had looked at them, and found they would do, she seemed quite satisfied, and it was settled that they should go.

The next morning, when the children came down-stairs, they found their mother so busy getting breakfast for their father and brothers, that they did not venture to interrupt her by asking any questions aloud, though they stood whispering together, trying to guess from the look of her face what had been settled after they were in bed the night before.

“ I’m afraid we shan’t go,” whispered

Robert ; "look, Nelly, how grave Mother looks."

"I don't know," answered Ellen, in the same tone, "I think she is only pretending; I am sure I saw a little bit of a smile at the corner of her mouth just now."

"Well, wait a minute," said Robert, "and I'll see;" and when his mother had finished what she was doing he went up to her, and said, "Mother, please look at me." His mother turned her face to him, trying to look grave, but the smile would come when she saw her little boy's droll look, which seemed to say "*I will make you smile at me.*" Directly Robert saw her smile, he clapped his hands, and called out, "We're going, Nelly! we're going!"

"Who told you that, Bob?" said his father's voice behind him. "Nobody," said Robert, turning round; "but I guessed it, because mother could not keep from smiling, no more can you, father, so I'm sure we're going," and he began to jump about the room; but he was soon tired of that, and

sitting down, he said, "Oh, dear! I'm so tired, jumping does make my legs ache so."

"Yes, my lad," said his father, "You're not strong enough yet to jump about at that rate; come and have some breakfast, and I hope by the time you come home again you'll be quite well and strong, and able to jump all day long."

All that day, and every day till they went, their mother was very busy mending and altering clothes for them. She cut up an old dress of her own, and made a frock out of it for Ellen; she made Robert quite a nice suit of clothes out of Sam's left-off things, and sponged and turned a shabby old black silk mantle that had been given her, so that it looked quite good again, and would do quite well for Ellen on Sundays.

While she was doing all this, Robert and Ellen had to take care of the two little ones; and as it was nice fine weather they were out of doors a great deal of the day, but Ellen used very soon to get tired of carrying baby, so sometimes a kind woman, who kept

a shop near them, and who had a perambulator, used to let her put both Tommy and baby into it, and then she and Robert pushed it by turns. Robert liked doing this, but he did not like so well to help Ellen, when they had either to carry the baby or look after Tommy, who could only just toddle along by himself; and Robert would sometimes leave poor Ellen to do this alone, while he went off to play with other boys, and when Ellen got back home she used to look quite worn out with having had Tommy pulling at her frock all the way.

One day, while resting upon a door-step, she had amused herself with looking across the street at the opposite window, where there were a great many straw bonnets and hats. She had never had a hat yet, and she began to long very much for one, and she went on thinking so over and over again, till she began to fancy that she ought to have one. When she got home, without looking what her mother was doing, she began, in a cross tone, as she took baby's hood off:

“Mother, I wish you would let me have a hat; all the other little girls have hats, and I think you might let me have one when I’m going to see my aunt.”

“I cannot afford to buy you one, Ellen,” said her mother; “and I think your bonnet will do very well for a bit longer yet for Sundays, and your little cotton ones do very well for every day.”

But Ellen was not satisfied. She came to the table where her mother stood ironing, and taking up her bonnet which lay near, she said, “It’s a nasty old thing, I wish it was done for;” and she put her finger into a place where the straw was unsewn a little, and made the hole larger.

Her mother took the bonnet from her quickly, saying, “For shame, Ellen! I’ve a good mind not to finish what I was going to do for you.”

As her mother said this Ellen’s eye fell for the first time upon Mrs. Cooper’s best bonnet, with its trimmings off, and then on the table, where she saw that her mother was ironing

the very ribbon which had been given her a little while before, and which Ellen had always admired so much when her mother had worn it on Sundays. In a minute she saw how naughty she had been. "Oh, mother! mother!" she said, "please to forgive me; are you really going to put that pretty ribbon upon my bonnet instead of your own? But what shall you do on Sunday?"

"Wear my everyday bonnet, or stay at home," said her mother. "Which do you think I had better do, Ellen?"

"Why, I don't think you can go to chapel in that old black bonnet, mother; so I am afraid you must stay at home."

"I can't say now which I shall do, because it will depend upon whether Tommy and baby are good enough for me to leave one of the boys to take care of them; but I certainly shall not stay away from chapel because I have not got my best bonnet," answered her mother; "I do not think, Ellen, that God would mind my old black bonnet, do you?"

"No," said Ellen; and, coming close up

to her mother, she gave her a kiss, and said almost in a whisper, "and He would know what a kind, good mother you are to give me your nice ribbon." And Ellen went away to take charge of baby again till Mrs. Cooper was ready to take her.

Her mother's kindness about the ribbon set Ellen thinking, and presently she came up to her again, and said slowly, "Mother, I don't think I can go to Aunt Susan's, for you want me to take care of baby, and what will you do without me? you know you cannot be nursing her always."

"Well," said her mother, "I'm glad you thought of that yourself, Ellen. At first it was one of the reasons that made me think I could not let you go, but I shall manage very well. Hannah Green will come and nurse baby when I can't have her in my arms and she's tired of lying in the cradle. Mrs. Green offered that she should when I told her that we were thinking to send you and Robert into the country."

"Oh, that's very nice," said Ellen; "but

I'm sure it's no more than Mrs. Green ought to do, after all your kindness to her when she was so ill." Ellen said this in rather a grand way, as if she were a woman, and her mother knew very well from her manner that she must have heard somebody else say the same sort of thing, and it was a way of speaking and thinking she did not like, so she said: "Yes, I am much obliged to Mrs. Green for the offer, and I daresay she is more willing to do me a good turn now, because when she wanted help I did what I could for her, but I would rather hear *her* say so than you, Nelly. I do not think it is a good plan to think or talk about what is owing to us from other people. All we have to do is to take care that we always do all we can for those who want help."

CHAPTER III.

HOPE REALISED.

AND so the time passed on till the Saturday morning when the two children were to go by an early train. They were to meet their uncle at the station at nine o'clock, and you may be sure that Ellen and Robert were up pretty early that morning, and, indeed, so were all in the house. When the children came down-stairs they found their mother tying up their clothes in two bundles, which she put ready on the table near the door. They were both dressed in their best things: Robert had on the new suit that his mother had made for him out of his brother's old clothes, and Ellen wore the frock made out of her mother's dress, which seemed to her so grand that she could hardly help smiling all the time; and she was sadly disappointed when one of her brothers said, in answer to

her question whether he thought her cousins had such nice frocks as that—"Aye, to be sure, I'll be bound they're dressed a deal better every day than we are on Sunday—why, uncle is a farmer."

What a farmer was Ellen did not very well know, only that farmers lived in the country; but she did not like to ask any more questions, lest she should have answers she did not like, for she did not believe what her brother told her. She thought he was only saying it to teaze her, which he was rather fond of doing.

Neither of the two children ate much breakfast. They were in a great hurry to go, and were quite sure they should be too late, because they had to wait while their mother got ready herself after she had made them quite neat. While they were waiting for her, their father called them to him, and setting them both before him, he said: "Now children, you're going away from mother and me for the first time, and there are one or two things I want you to remember. The

first is always to speak the truth ; perhaps you will find it more difficult sometimes than you think for, but don't tell a lie, even to get yourself or one another out of a scrape. The next thing is to be obedient and well-behaved to your uncle and aunt, and any one they may set over you ; and the last is not to meddle with anything without asking leave, you may get into terrible trouble if you do."

Both children said " Yes, father ;" but I do not think the words they had just heard went much into their minds then, they were too busy watching for their mother to come through the door at the bottom of the stairs.

At last she came ; and then they started. Robert walking with his mother and carrying his own bundle, which he begged very hard to be allowed to do, though he soon grew tired of it, and let his mother take it ; and Ellen trotting by her father's side and holding his hand fast, for, somehow, she began to feel a little uncomfortable to think that she was really going away, without any of the people she had been used to except

Robert. They soon came to the station, and there was Uncle George waiting for them, and the train standing all ready with the engine in front of it puffing out a cloud of white steam every minute. Then a man dressed in white, but with his face and hands very black, ran by them, and Robert whispered to Ellen that that was the man that drove the engine. Ellen did not know what that meant; but she stared after the man as he ran on and jumped up on to the engine. Then a bell rang, and her father lifted her up and gave her a kiss, and said "Good bye, little one, mind you get some roses on your cheeks before you come back;" and then her mother gave her a great hug, and several kisses, and then the same to Robert; but Uncle George said they must make haste; so he popped Ellen and Robert into one of the carriages, their father handed in their bundles, Uncle George jumped in, the engine gave a great shriek, and away they went.

Poor Ellen did not know how she felt when she lost sight of her father and mother;

she was almost inclined to try to get out of the train, till her uncle took her upon his knee and began to talk kindly to her. Robert was quite happy, walking from one end of the carriage to the other, and asking Uncle George all sorts of questions. Ellen did not feel unhappy long, and she was very much pleased to look out of the window and see how fast everything seemed to go by. Once they passed a field where there were some cows, and the minute the train came by all the cows began to run about as fast as they could go. "Oh, Robert! Robert! do look at the cows," called out Ellen; "what is the matter with them?"

"They are frightened at the train," said Uncle George; "but they will soon learn not to mind it when they find it does them no harm."

"Oh, I hope they won't, I like to see them run about in that way," said Ellen.

So she and Robert amused themselves the rest of the way by looking out for some more frightened cows; but all the other cows they

passed, had learnt, I suppose, that the train would not hurt them, for they went on eating without even lifting up their heads as the noisy thing passed by. At last they stopped at a station, where the policeman who was walking up and down cried out, "Tradly! Tradly!" and as soon as the train had quite stopped, their uncle helped them out, and then took them to sit on a bench, where he put their bundles by them, telling them to sit still and he would come to them again presently. So they watched some people get out of the train, and some others get in, and then off it went again, with another scream, which made Ellen jump, and then it was all quiet; but they did not see their uncle, and poor Ellen began to think that he had gone away in the train.

"Oh dear! Robert," said she, "what shall we do if Uncle George has gone away and left us."

"Nonsense," said Robert, "he's not gone away."

"Well, I don't know," said poor little

Ellen ; “ I’m sure I saw a man with a green jacket on get into the train, and you know, Robert, Uncle George has got on a green jacket.”

“ So have all the porters,” said Robert ; “ don’t you see there’s another man in a green jacket. I’m sure Uncle George has not gone. Why, there he is, Nelly ; that’s Uncle George,” Robert went on, laughing ; “ but whatever is he doing, pushing that carriage so hard ? Oh look, Nelly, it is turning round ;” and the children watched with great pleasure a large carriage being brought across the lines by Uncle George and two or three other porters.

Soon after, they saw a woman come through a door near them, and look about as if she wanted somebody. She had a very pleasant face, and looked fresh and rosy.

“ Nelly,” whispered Robert, “ I do believe that’s our aunt Susan.”

“ I don’t believe it is,” answered Nelly ; “ it’s some lady.”

Just then the woman saw them, and came

up to them, saying, "Why, I do believe you are the very children I'm looking for. What are your names, my little dears?"

Both the children coloured up, and Robert said, very low, "Robert Cooper and Ellen Cooper, please ma'am."

"My own little nephew and niece, I do declare," cried their aunt, for she it was; "and welcome to Tradly, my dears," and she kissed them both—such loud kisses—and her voice was so loud and merry, too, that Ellen could not help staring at her, and feeling a little afraid of her; it was so different from her mother's gentle voice and manner; but it was such a kind good-humoured face that was smiling at her, that she thought she should not be afraid long.

Well, to be sure," their aunt went on to say, as she looked at them, "I'm sure you look as if you would be all the better for some country air. I never saw two such poor little thin miserable-looking things in my life. But we'll send you home looking very different, I can tell you;" and she

turned away to shake hands with Uncle George, who had just come up.

"Robert," said Ellen, low, to her brother, "What made her eyes look so red? I do believe she was crying; look, she's wiping her eyes. Now, what can she be crying for?"

"I don't know," said Robert; "perhaps because her eyes watered."

"No," said Ellen, with a shake of her wise little head.

But they had no time for more talk just then, for their aunt turned round to them again, saying: "Well then, dearies, we must be off, for we have to go into the market to fetch your uncle, and we must make haste or we shan't be back by dinner-time. Here, give me your bundles, and I'll put them in the trap;" and she bustled out of the station, outside which stood a neat light cart with a good brown horse in it, and on the front seat was a great boy, almost a man, who jumped down when he saw them, and their aunt said: "Here, Ned, these are your two little cousins;" and then,

turning to the children, "that's my eldest boy Ned, shake hands with him, there's dears."

They shook hands with their great cousin, but were too shy to speak, and poor little Ellen felt quite frightened, when he jumped her up and popped her into the trap, so that she could sit on the back seat, for she had never ridden in any kind of carriage before ; and she felt so high up and so strange, that she was almost ready to cry. But Robert, who was by her side in a minute, was not frightened at all, and looked so pleased and happy, that Ellen felt comforted ; only she did hope that the horse would not start off. The next minute she almost tumbled off the seat ; and was obliged to hold fast by the rail that was by her, for when her aunt got up in front, the trap swung about so that she thought it would go over altogether, and she was glad when Uncle George came to the side to say good-bye to her. She jumped when Cousin Ned got up and cracked his whip, and the horse started, and held her

breath for a minute or two ; but when she found how safely they went along, and felt the pleasant fresh country air blowing in her face she was soon as happy as Robert, and they began to look about them and talk together in a low voice.

They went first into the market-place to find their uncle, and there they were very much amused to see the pigs, and sheep, and cows in pens, and many other things that were very different from what they were accustomed to. It was all so new and strange that they hardly knew what they saw or heard, but they had a feeling that everything looked very clean and bright, and that all the people had very rosy faces and very loud merry voices. They drove up to the door of an inn, and in a minute or two a tall man dressed all in grey came out, spoke to their aunt a minute, and then came round and shook hands with Robert and Ellen, asking them how they were in a pleasant voice, and looking kindly at them. He did not look so fat or merry as their aunt, and his face was





"They went on just the same, straight through the water."

rather long and pale, but though it was grave, it was a very pleasant face to look at, it was so sensible and kind, and when he did smile there was a twinkle in his eye that showed he was not always grave.

He got up and sat beside their aunt, and Ned got down. "Don't be late, my lad," said their uncle; and Ned answered, "No, father;" and leaving him to walk, they started on their journey. The horse trotted with them merrily along the fresh country lanes, and the children were in a state of rapturous delight. Once Ellen felt rather frightened, for they came to a place where there was water all across the road, and she wondered whatever they should do, when to her great surprise they went on just the same, straight through the water, which came half way up the wheels. Robert was so delighted that he clapped his hands and called out so loud that the horse gave a jump, and his uncle told him he must not do so, or he would perhaps make the horse run away. Poor Robert, who in his pleasure at going

through the water had quite forgotten what he was doing or whom he was with, hung down his head and did not speak again for a long time.

At last they came to a house that stood by the road-side, with a small garden in front, and a low stone wall all round it; there were two or three steps up into the garden, and a curious old iron gate at the top of them; but though their uncle called out, "Here we are," he did not stop at the iron gate, but drove on a little, and turned in at a large wooden gate, which opened into a great yard, and drew up at a door on one side, from which one or two dogs came out barking, and several children clapping their hands and shouting at the sight of their little cousins in the trap.

There was such a noise and confusion that Ellen and Robert felt quite shy, and hardly knew where they were, till their cousins had taken them into the large kitchen, and there they all stood looking at each other without speaking, till their aunt came bustling in

from the door, with a fat little boy about as old as Tommy toddling along by her side, and hiding his face in his mother's gown whenever he saw Ellen looking at him.

We must now call Ellen's and Robert's aunt by her name, which was Mrs. Buxton. She came up to where the children were all standing silent and shy, and sitting down on a large wooden chair, and taking the fat little boy on her knee, she said, "Well Lucy, and Billy, and Dick, have you got nothing to say to your cousins?" and then drawing Ellen kindly towards her, she went on: "This is Cousin Ellen, Lucy, she is just about as old as you, I guess; come and take hold of her hand." And Lucy, who, like all the rest, had rosy cheeks and blue eyes, came up to Ellen and slipped her hand into hers. "And these are my boys, Dick and Billy, Robert; I wonder which is nearest your age—how old are you?" Robert answered that he was nine years old, and then they found out that Dick was only a few days older than Robert, though he was

much taller and stouter. Billy was a year or two older.

While her aunt was talking to the boys, Ellen whispered to Lucy, "What is the name of that little boy?" pointing to the little fellow on Mrs. Buxton's knee.

"That's little Phil," answered Lucy.

"May I give him a kiss?" asked Ellen, "he looks so nice."

"Oh yes," said Lucy; and Ellen, stepping up to her aunt's knee, tried to steal a kiss, but little Phil hid his face under his mother's arm, and Ellen ran round behind to catch one there, but then he popped back again, and Ellen ran round again, so in a minute or two they were having quite a merry game, and at last, when Ellen had managed to kiss little Phil's fat neck, he grew quite friendly with her, and trotted off very happily between her and Lucy, when Mrs. Buxton told Lucy to show Ellen where she was to sleep. They went up-stairs and passed several doors, and then up again till they came to a large room with two beds in it. Lucy walked up to one

of them and said, "That's where you and I are to sleep."

"And who sleeps in that other bed?" asked Ellen.

"Oh, Harriet sleeps there, my big sister," said Lucy. "You have not seen her yet; she is busy waiting upon the Miss Langfords at dinner."

"Waiting upon who?" asked Ellen.

"Why, on two young ladies who are staying here," answered Lucy; "two such nice ladies, Ellen. Sometimes I go into the parlour, and they tell me such nice stories. I'll ask mother if you may come too, next time they send for me. But now, take off your bonnet, and come down to dinner; I hear mother calling us, and I'm so hungry."

Ellen was feeling very hungry too; more so than she had ever done since she was ill; so she made haste, and they took little Phil carefully down stairs, where they found the dinner all ready. There were two tables set out; at one sat the farmer and his wife and

children, and at the other the women servants and farm labourers, some of whom looked very odd to Ellen and Robert, for they wore smock-frocks, like great pinafores, and looked very different from the people they were accustomed to see at home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FARM-YARD.

BEFORE the children went to bed that night they had seen no end of wonderful things. They had been round the farm-yard with Lucy, Dick, and Billy; had seen the pigs fed, peeped at two or three hens which were sitting, and at last, Dick, calling out that it was milking time, set the large gate wide open, and a minute or two afterwards Ellen saw first one cow's head, and then another, and another, all coming into the yard. Having lived in a town all her life, Ellen had never been accustomed to see nice, quiet farm cows; and when they all came close to her, she was so frightened at them, that she ran away, dragging Lucy with her, and calling out, "Oh, dear! oh, dear! I'm so frightened!" till she ran up against her cousin Harriet, who was coming out of the house with her milking-pail in her hand, and

little Phil toddling by her, shouting out, "Moo, moo."

Dick, and Billy, and Robert, too, all burst out laughing when they saw Ellen running away; but I am not quite sure that Robert did not feel a *very* little bit frightened himself when the cows came quite close to him (though he did join in his cousin's laugh), they looked so large, and their horns looked so sharp and strong as they lowered their heads to walk into the cow-house. When Lucy knew what Ellen was frightened at, she joined the laugh too—it seemed so very droll to her for any one to be afraid of cows; so that poor Ellen felt almost ready to cry, and when Lucy tried to draw her towards the cow-house again, she pulled back, and said crossly:

"No, I shan't go; I don't want to see the nasty cows milked."

Harriet, who had passed on with Phil, turned round when she heard that cross voice, and, coming to Ellen again, she said kindly:

“ Oh, yes, Ellen, come with me ; I will take care the cows don’t hurt you ; they are all tied up now.”

At first Ellen felt inclined to be sulky, and stand where she was ; but when she looked at Harriet’s pleasant face she thought better of it, and followed her slowly across the yard to the door of the cow-house, where she stood and saw Harriet sit down and begin to milk the cow nearest to the door. She was very much surprised to see how still the cows stood, but she did not dare to venture in that night, nor for several days after, but stood watching and thinking to herself, “ What a little milk Harriet gets out at a time ; I’m sure I could get more.”

But poor Ellen’s frights were not over yet, for the three boys ran off out of the yard, and, presently after, Ellen was startled by seeing several great white birds with very long necks coming walking towards her, with their heads stretched out, and making a most horrible noise, and behind them

came Robert and her two cousins, shouting and hallooing, and throwing about their arms.

Poor Ellen screamed out so loud, that Harriet jumped up, and almost upset her can of milk, calling out, "Good gracious, child, what is the matter now?"

"Oh, the swans! the swans!" screamed Ellen, clinging to her. "Oh, save me! save me!"

"Well, leave off screaming, then," said Harriet, who could hardly help laughing; "they are not swans, they are only geese, and I think you must be a goose yourself, for I'm sure I never saw such a little coward; they will not hurt you. Come, loose me, I want to go on milking."

But Ellen clung to her the more; indeed, she was so frightened she hardly knew what she was doing. Just then she heard a voice close to her saying, "Is anything the matter?"

"No, miss," answered Harriet, "only my little cousin was frightened at the geese, and

now I cannot get her to loose me ; but she is hindering me sadly."

"Here, little girl, come with me," said the same kind voice ; and Ellen, lifting up her head, saw a pleasant-looking young lady standing by them. She held out her hand, and said again, "Here, come with me, and we will go into the garden and look at some of the pretty flowers that Mrs. Buxton is so fond of." And she led Ellen out of the farm-yard, and up the stone steps which she had noticed in the lane. The little girl hung back at first very shyly, but when she had passed through the iron gate, and stood in the beautiful garden which stretched away from the other side of the house, she seemed quite to forget that she was with a stranger, and running up to a rose-bush in full bloom, she stood still before it, and then, looking at the beds of bright flowers all round her, she said aloud, "Oh ! I wish mother was here."

"Is your mother so fond of flowers ?" asked the lady.

“Yes, ma’am,” said Ellen; “she had a little plant with a pretty smell in a pot last summer, and when I broke it she was so sorry.”

“A plant with a pretty smell? I wonder what it was,” said the lady, “let us see if there is one like it in your aunt’s garden.” And she showed Ellen first one plant and then another; some had sweet smelling flowers, and Miss Langford told her to pinch the leaves of some, and then smell her fingers; and at last when she had done this to a little plant with small roundish green leaves, which looked rather soft and downy, and grew close to the ground, Ellen called out joyfully, “That’s it, I am sure;” and turning round her smiling face, she saw her new friend watching her kindly. All her shyness came back again, and she said no more; but the young lady came to look at the plant, and told her its name was musk, and that in a little while it would have pretty yellow flowers, and she told Ellen she would ask her aunt to let her

have a little plant of it to take home to her mother, which Ellen thought would be charming.

Then Miss Langford proposed that they should sit down on a garden seat; and talked so kindly to Ellen about her home, and her mother and father and brothers, that the little girl's fears went quite away; and she thought she should like to sit there for ever, with the pleasant soft wind blowing in her face, and the beautiful flowers round her, and the bright blue sky above her head. Such a great deal of sky—a great deal more than poor little Ellen had ever seen before; for she had hardly ever been quite out of the streets, so that it was a new thing to her to see sky on every side wherever she looked, and it made her feel very happy. Presently, however, she saw Lucy coming to fetch her to supper; and after that, the younger children, and Robert and Ellen with them, went off to bed; but not before Robert had told his sister wonderful things that he had been doing with his cousins—

how they had penned the geese and driven the cows back to the field, and many other things, all equally new and charming to the little town boy.

Robert sometimes got into trouble because he was very curious, always wanting to know about everything, and sometimes meddling where he ought not; and Cousin Dick, who was very mischievous, soon taught him some of his tricks, so they both sometimes got a sharp scolding from Mrs. Buxton, but as soon as her anger was passed she thought no more about it, and Dick forgot it quite as soon. At first, Robert, who was accustomed to mind what his mother said, was rather shocked to see how little Dick cared; but "don't care" is a habit quickly caught, and Robert soon began to agree with Dick that the fun was worth more than the scolding.

One morning after breakfast, Mrs. Buxton called Lucy and Ellen to her, and told them that they might go and look at the white hen that was sitting in the barn, for she fancied

they might find some chickens. Off ran the two little girls; but when they got into the barn they found Dicky and Robert there before them. The poor hen was making a great noise, and there seemed to be a scuffle, and Robert and Dick were calling out to each other, so that they did not see the little girls till they were close to them. What Mrs. Buxton had said was quite true; there was a whole brood of beautiful little chickens hatched, and the two little boys had been trying to catch them to look at them, and had frightened them sadly, so that they were running all about, and the poor hen was turning round and round in such a fuss that at last she set her foot upon one of the chickens, which gave a squeak and then lay quite still.

“Oh dear! oh dear!” cried Lucy, “go away, you naughty boys. Oh, I do believe that dear little chicken is dead! What will mother say?” and she knelt down and took up the poor little chicken very tenderly in her hand, and then all the

four children stood round to look at it, for the little boys were quite shocked to think that it was their fault that the poor chicken was hurt.

"It's not dead, Lucy, what a goose you are," said Dick; "look, it's eyes are open; I dare say it has nothing the matter with it; let me see?"

"No, you shan't touch it, Dick, you'll hurt it; I shall take it to mother," answered Lucy; and they all went in to find Mrs. Buxton. She was in the parlour talking to Miss Langford, so they had to wait a few minutes for her, but when she came out Lucy ran to her, calling out, "Oh, mother! mother! do see what is the matter with this poor little chicken, the hen trod upon it, and it seems as if it could not stand."

"The hen trod upon it, child," said her mother; "well, I never knew her to do such a thing before, she is the best hen I have for taking care of her chicks; why, I declare its leg is broken, the clumsy thing." Here,

Robert, who could not bear to hear anyone blamed wrongfully, even a hen, said, "If you please, Aunt, I am afraid it was our fault, for we wanted to catch the chickens to look how pretty they were." Here Dick gave him a great pull to make him quiet, and his Aunt turned sharp upon him, but, instead of scolding him, after she had looked at his face a minute, she said, "That's right, lad, don't be afraid to tell when you've done wrong." Then, turning to Dick, she told him she would punish him severely if ever she found him meddling with the chickens again.

Mrs. Buxton then sat down to examine the chicken's leg, and she told Lucy she must have a bit of card, which Lucy soon found, and her mother cut two thin little strips and put them on each side of the poor little broken leg. "Now I want something very soft and thin to bind it round," said she.

Lucy thought a minute, and then she said, "Mother, would that bit of ribbon do that

Miss Langford gave me for my doll's sash?"

"Just the very thing, child, whip off and fetch it," answered her mother; and Lucy went—not quite so quickly as she had gone to fetch the card, for it was rather hard to part with the pretty blue ribbon; but she soon came back and gave it to her mother, who wound it round and round the two little bits of card and the leg, so as to keep the leg quite still and straight; and when she had done she said, "Well, now, where must we put the poor little thing, for I can't spare any more time about it, there's half a hundred things waiting for me now. Here, Harriet, come and see if you can find something to put this lame chick into."

"Oh, please Aunt," said Ellen, "let me sit down and have it in my lap."

"Very well, dear, you shall nurse it till they have found something to put it in."

Ellen sat down on the stool, and her aunt laid the sick chicken in her lap, and bustled

off about other things. Harriet came, and she soon found a good sized basket, in which she put a piece of flannel, and on it they laid the chicken. Harriet told the two little girls to watch it for a little while, to see if it seemed comfortable, and not too hot near the fire, where she put it.

Just as they had done all this, in came Mrs. Buxton, saying, "Why, you never told me how many chickens there were."

"I don't believe we ever counted," said Lucy; "do run, Ellen, and count them."

Ellen was very proud of being sent into the barn by herself, so she ran off quickly, but very soon came back with a very long face, and almost crying, saying, "Oh dear, Aunt, the chickens are all gone, I can't see one."

"Bless the child," cried her aunt, laughing, "I'll be bound they are all under the hen, and so she thinks they're gone. Here, come with me, little one, and we'll find them;"

and she took Ellen by the hand and led her into the barn again, where certainly there were no chicks to be seen, only the old hen looking very fat and puffy sitting close to the ground. Mrs. Buxton picked her up in spite of her pecking and kicking, and then Ellen saw that all the brood of chickens had been covered up under the hen's wings and feathers, and they counted and found there were eleven besides the sick one.

When they went back into the house, Lucy met them at the door, with a face full of surprise, exclaiming, "Oh, do come here, mother, the funniest thing has happened you ever heard. I was sitting watching the basket, as Harriet told me, and in walked poor puss, who lost all her kittens the other day, and I was so frightened, for she went up to the basket and smelt about, and then, before I could prevent her, she jumped in, and I thought to be sure she had killed my dear little chicken, but, instead of eating him up, she lay down and curled herself round him and began to purr, and the chicken

seems to like it too, for he snuggles up to her quite close."

"Well, I never heard anything like that," exclaimed her mother; and, going in, they peeped into the basket, and there certainly was the cat curled round the little yellow chicken, both looking as happy as possible, and the cat purring as loud as the singing of a tea-kettle. Her mother told Lucy that she would give them both into her charge, and that she must take care that the cat always had plenty of food, that she might not feel tempted to eat up her little pet. She desired her to give the chicken soaked bread, and promised her that if the leg got well she should have the chicken for her own.

Ellen was very pleased to help Lucy to take care of the cat and her adopted child, and they fed them regularly every day, till at last one morning they found the chicken standing up on both its legs, and the next day it actually hopped up on to the edge of the basket, and down on to the floor,

which seemed to astonish Mrs. Puss very much, for out she bounded too.

The little girls ran to tell Mrs. Buxton, and she soon came, and catching the little thing, she undid the bandage round its leg, and to their great delight the poor little leg was quite cured. They ran to tell everyone that the chicken was well again, and at last tapped gently at the parlour door to tell their news, for the young ladies had often been to look at the droll nurse and her little invalid. They were very glad to hear that the chicken was cured, and Miss Susan Langford told them that once at their home a little tame robin that used to come to the window in the winter for crumbs, had grown so bold that he would come into the kitchen, where one day he got his leg broken by the door slamming, on the top of which he was sitting. He was so much hurt that it was of no use trying to mend his leg, so one of Miss Langford's brothers cut off the broken leg, and when that got well enough he very cleverly made the robin a little wooden leg, upon

which he hopped about for the rest of his life.

“Oh, Miss Susan! is that really true?” asked Lucy.

“Yes, quite true; I remember seeing him with his little wooden leg quite well, when I was a little girl.”

CHAPTER V.

THE POOR HELP THE POOR.

I AM not going to tell you everything that happened to Ellen and Robert while they were at their uncle's, or my story would never be finished; for every day, and all day long, they found some fresh pleasure in the farm-house life; and, in a very few days, they lost their sickly looks, and felt quite strong and well again. I must, however, tell you of something that happened the first Sunday the children spent at the farm, when poor Ellen had a great trial. When it was time for them to get ready to go to church, she ran up-stairs into the bedroom before her cousins, and there, laid upon Lucy's bed, with her other best things, was a white straw hat trimmed with white ribbons, and blue bows inside, just like the one Ellen had so longed for out of the shop. She walked up to it, and stood looking at it,

without speaking ; but I am afraid in her heart she was thinking how she disliked her bonnet which lay on the bed close by. She started when her cousin Harriet spoke, saying—"Why Ellen, what are you looking at?"

"What a pretty hat!" was Ellen's answer, in a dreamy tone.

"Yes," her cousin went on, taking up Ellen's bonnet, you should get your mother to buy you one like Lucy's, instead of this shabby bonnet and old-fashioned ribbon."

But the mention of the ribbon brought back to Ellen the thought of her mother in the kitchen at home, and of what had passed there between them. The colour came into her face, and her eyes filled with tears, and she squeezed her hands together very tight for a moment, and then, stretching them to her cousin, who was holding up the bonnet and looking at it with what Ellen thought a very disagreeable look in her face, she said: "Please, Harriet, give me my bonnet ; I

would rather have it than all the hats that ever were made."

"Then I'm sure you are welcome to it," answered Harriet. "It is the funniest-looking thing I ever saw, except old Peggy Wilders'." And putting it into Ellen's hands, she turned away to dress herself for church, little thinking how much pain her thoughtless words had given. Poor little Ellen's heart was very full, and she felt very angry with her cousin—too angry to speak—but she tied on her bonnet, and put on her little black silk cloak; and, then, without saying a word, went down-stairs; and, when the rest came into the kitchen, she was standing at the window with her finger in her mouth, both feeling and looking very cross. Lucy, who had grown very fond of Ellen, came up to her, and slipped her hand into hers, but Ellen pulled it away, and said, "I shan't walk with you, I shall walk with Robert." But Robert was not inclined to walk with her, particularly when he saw how cross she looked; and he and

Dick were very merry and happy, running round and round, and backwards and forwards, near the rest of the party, all the way to church.

Mr. and Mrs. Buxton noticed that Ellen kept away from the other children and walked by herself very gravely, and her uncle asked what was the matter with the "little woman"—his usual name for Ellen. Harriet, who was walking with her father and mother, knew very well, but she felt also that they would not have been pleased if they had known what had passed up-stairs about Ellen's bonnet. So she said nothing, and resolved she would try to make it up to Ellen; but she thought at the same time that her cousin was a cross little thing. Meanwhile, poor Ellen kept on thinking of what seemed to her her cousin's great unkindness, and feeling every moment more and more angry with her, till, by the time they reached the church, a feeling very like hatred had filled her poor little heart, so that she got as far away from Harriet as she could in the large,

old-fashioned, square pew, which belonged to her uncle.

Ellen and Robert had never been to church before, as their father and mother always went to a chapel at home; so they were rather puzzled by the number of times that the people stood up and sat down, and amused and interested to watch all that went on; and by the time service was over, Ellen had forgotten her troubles; but as they left the church, she heard Dicky say to Robert: "Just look, Bob, that's Peggy Wilders; did you ever see such a bonnet? Is it not for all the world like an old coal-scuttle turned over her head?"

"Yes," answered Robert, laughing. "What a queer thing. I should like to shoot a pea through that tall bow on the top."

Ellen looked at the old woman about whom the boys were talking, and saw that she was very tall and thin, and that she wore a very large old-fashioned straw bonnet, with a bunch of ribbon bows stuck on the top of the crown, which certainly did look very odd.

Now, if Ellen had been in a happy temper, she would have seen at once that Harriet had not really meant what she had said when she told her her bonnet was almost as queer as Peggy Wilders'; but she had let her ill-temper get the better of her, so now she began almost to forget what her bonnet really looked like, and to fancy that what her cousin had said was true; and back came all her old angry thoughts, and with them a longing to hide herself out of the way, that people might not laugh at her bonnet, as she fancied everyone that looked at her was doing; so she shrunk back, and kept behind all the rest, almost a field's length, all the way home.

When she reached the farm, she crept upstairs, and taking off her bonnet, threw it on the bed, and without looking at it or anything else, she laid her head down on the bed, and began to cry bitterly. Her cousins had taken off their things before she came in, so she was alone in the room. Presently she heard somebody come up-stairs, and Lucy

came into her room, calling her by name, but she did not stir. Lucy came to her, and put her arm round her, saying, "Oh, dear Ellen! what is the matter? Don't cry. Dinner is ready, and father is asking for you, and there is currant pudding; do stop crying."

At first Ellen would not move; but she was rather afraid of her uncle, who she knew did not like to be kept waiting by any of the children; and then she was very hungry, and currant pudding was very good. But she did not choose to come round all at once, so at first she said, "Go away Lucy; I don't want any dinner. I want to go home."

"Oh dear!" said poor little Lucy, sadly. "What is the matter? Do, please, Ellen, come down, father will be angry;" and she lifted up Ellen's face, which was all smeared with tears, and kissed her so kindly that Ellen could not help feeling rather better; and when Lucy brought her the brush to make her hair neat, and persuaded her to

wash her face, she began to think she had better not lose the currant pudding, though she felt quite ashamed to go down with her face telling such tales, and she never looked up, but crept to her place and sat down very quietly.

Lucy had run down quickly first, and had told them Ellen had been crying, and begged them to take no notice; and so no one said anything about her red eyes, and when she had eaten a few mouthfuls, the disagreeable feeling in her throat, which had come from crying so much, got better, so that she was ready to enjoy the currant pudding when it came, though she still was very quiet and silent. Her uncle and aunt could not think what was the matter with the little girl; and, after dinner, her uncle told her he was going into the garden to see if he could find a few ripe strawberries for the Miss Langfords, and asked her if she would like to come with him. Ellen said "Yes," but rather timidly; and several of the other children began to beg to go too; but her uncle said—"No; I

do not want the whole lot ; the little woman and I will go quietly by ourselves this time."

None of them said another word, and this was not the first time Ellen had noticed that, fond as all her cousins were of their father, they never tried to persuade him to alter his mind after he had once said no to a thing.

She was still a little bit afraid of her uncle, and thought now that perhaps he was going to scold her for having cried, or for being late at dinner ; but he said nothing of the sort, and taking her kindly by the hand, he led her up the garden to the strawberry beds. Having gathered a cabbage leaf to put them into, they set about looking for the ripe fruit ; her uncle showing Ellen how to know if it was fit to gather, by looking whether the little seeds outside the strawberry had turned brown. As long as they were green, he told her, the fruit was not ripe ; but if they were brown, even if the strawberry was not quite red all over, it was ready

to be eaten. They did not find many ripe, but they were very merry, hunting under the leaves and trying which could see the most ripe ones, till at last, Ellen stood still and began to fan herself with her pinafore, saying she was so hot she could not look for any more; so her uncle sent her in with the fruit for the ladies, and then proposed that they should go into the arbour, and he would tell her a story.

When they reached the pretty arbour, covered with roses and honeysuckle, and her uncle took her on his knee, Ellen quite forgot all her feeling of fear of him, and begged him to begin his story.

"Yes, in a minute," he answered; "but first I want my little woman to tell me what was the matter before dinner."

Ellen hung down her head, and her cheeks turned very red; after all he was going to talk about her trouble. She did not think he would scold her, but she did not want to tell him; it would sound so silly to a man to tell him she had been

crying about her bonnet; so at first she said, "Nothing."

"Nothing," repeated her uncle; "Nelly, that is not quite true, I think; I do not believe people ever make themselves so wretched as you were before dinner really for nothing." Tell me what it is, dear, or I shall begin to think that you are not happy here."

"Oh, no, Uncle," said Ellen, "but Harriet laughed at my old bonnet, and said it was like Peggy Wilders'; and then I saw the boys making fun of Peggy Wilders, so I thought they would make fun of me next, and I felt very wicked and angry."

Her uncle looked very grave while she was speaking, and said, in a displeased tone, "Harriet was very wrong; I must speak to her." But Ellen stopped him, saying, "Oh, no, please don't, Uncle, I should not have minded it half so much if I had not been very naughty about my bonnet;" and she told her uncle what had happened before she

left home. When she had done he kissed her kindly, and said, "Well, your mother gave you a good lesson then, Ellen, to show you that we ought not to judge of people by what they have on; and now that you have told me about your bonnet, I will tell you a story, as I promised you I would."

Ellen settled herself comfortably on her uncle's knee, and he began :

"Not very far from here there is a row of small cottages, and three or four years ago a poor man and his wife and four little children came to live in one of them, next door to an old woman who had lived there for a long time. She was a very tall, thin old woman, and always went about in a very funny large old bonnet stuck on the top of an odd-looking cap, with a very full thick border."

"Oh, Uncle," cried Ellen, "I know who that was." But without noticing what she said, her uncle went on : "The little children who lived near used to make fun of the old

woman, and call after her, when they first came there, but, somehow or other, they soon left it off. The eldest of the four children who I told you came to live next door to the old woman, a bold little boy of eight years old, named Peter Hern, found a new name for the large bonnet, and he used to shout out 'coal-scuttle,' whenever he saw the old woman; and as the new name took the fancy of the other boys, they some of them joined him. Peter did not go to school, so he used to sit all the morning on a low stone wall opposite the cottages, and whenever he saw the old woman moving about, in or out of her cottage, he screamed out 'coal-scuttle'; and when the other boys came home from school, they used to come and sit by him, and call it out too. Some of the neighbours used to wonder how the old woman bore it without getting angry; but whenever they said anything to her about it, she would say, 'O, never mind, he'll leave it off, as the rest have done.' About that time there was a very bad fever in the village, and many

people died of it. One morning, when the old woman was sitting at her breakfast, she heard some one knocking at the door. She called out 'Come in,' and to her surprise, little Peter's rough untidy head was poked in round the door, which he only opened a little way. His face was very dirty, as it generally was, and he looked very much frightened; he stared at the old woman as she sat there with the usual cap and bonnet on her head, drinking her tea out of the saucer, while a loaf of bread and a bit of bacon stood on the table; and then he said, 'I say, father and mother's bad, and no one won't come anigh us.'

"'Father and mother both ill, boy,' said the old woman, getting up; 'run along, I'll be in directly;' and, without staying to finish her breakfast, she went into the next house, where she found the poor man and his wife both so ill that she was afraid they could not live, and all the little children crying. She soon sent Peter off to fetch the doctor, took the little baby up in her arms,

and tried to quiet it ; and, when she found that they had had no breakfast, she took the two little girls into her own cottage and gave them a piece of bread each, and fed the poor little baby with some milk.

“ I cannot stop to tell you all that the good woman did ; but she took care of the poor little children for several days, and showed Peter how to do what he could for his father and mother ; but they were so ill that, after a few days, they both died ; and then the kind old woman took all the four children into her own house, and they have lived with her ever since ; and she works hard to get food enough for them all. Peter is grown a great boy.”

“ Oh, Uncle,” cried out Ellen, “ I know, I know. He’s your Peter who feeds the pigs, and the old woman is Peggy Wilders.”

“ Yes, dear,” said her uncle, “ you have guessed right ; and I think now you will not be surprised to hear that it makes Peter very angry to hear any one laugh at Peggy’s

great bonnet; not that all the people who live near her are very glad when they see it coming; for wherever she goes the good old woman seems always to be trying to do good to other people."

"Oh, is that the end?" sighed Ellen; "please tell me another story, Uncle."

"No, little woman," he answered, "I cannot spare any more time now;" and setting her down off his knee, he went towards the house. Ellen ran to find Robert, and tell him all about Peggy Wilders. She found him, as usual, with Dick, who exclaimed, "when she had finished her story: "Oh, yes, nothing makes Peter so mad as to ask him after old coal-scuttle; I thought he would have killed me one day when I did."

Ellen was very near saying, "I wish he had;" but she remembered just in time that this would not be a very kind wish towards her cousin; but she could not help saying, with a very red face, "Well, Dick, I do not think I should

have been *very* sorry if he had hurt you a little."

"I dare say not, Mrs. Prim," answered Dick, giving his cousin's frock a twitch as he passed her in running out of the room.

CHAPTER VI.

GRATEFUL PETER.

ONE day, after they had been two or three weeks at the farm, and Ellen had grown so accustomed to the cows that she liked to stroke them, and was even brave enough to drive the screaming geese, she went into the barn, as she now often did, with a little basket in her hand, to see if she could find any eggs for her aunt ; for some of the hens would not lay their eggs in the nests that were made ready for them in the hen-house, but would lay them in odd places about the barn and cow-house.

Ellen heard Dick's and Robert's voices laughing and whispering outside the barn in the stack-yard, and she peeped through between two planks in the barn door to see what they were doing. They were both sitting on a gate looking full of mischief, and Dick seemed to be trying to make Robert do

something he did not want to do ; poking him with his elbow, and looking towards Peter, who was just coming near them. As Ellen looked, Peter passed the two boys, and came on towards the barn ; and then Dick almost pushed Robert off the gate, and the little boy came running after Peter, and said something to him, and then turned to run back again.

Ellen was quite frightened when she saw Peter's face, as he turned quickly after Robert—he looked so dreadfully angry—and she tried to call out, but it seemed as if all her voice was gone. In a moment more Peter had caught poor little Robert, and given him a blow which threw him down on the ground, from which Ellen expected to see him jump up and fly at Peter, for she knew how fierce a blow always made him. He did not get up, however, but lay still.

Ellen just saw Dick spring down from the gate, but, the next moment, she was flying across the yard to her uncle, who was at the other end. She seized hold of his coat, and

began to drag him towards the barn before he could tell what she wanted; but he saw how frightened she looked, and guessed something really was the matter, so went with her at once, only saying kindly, "What's the matter now, little woman?" His kind voice went straight to poor little Ellen's heart, and she sobbed out, "Peter has killed Robert."

By this time they were round the barn, and there were Dick and Peter both on their knees by poor little Robert, who lay quite still; both the boys' faces looked very white and strange, but they took no notice of Ellen and her uncle.

"Stand aside," said Mr. Buxton, in a very low quiet voice, and both the boys got up without speaking a word. His uncle knelt down by Robert, and put his hand upon him, and then taking him up in his arms, he said to Ellen, whose tears were streaming down her face, "Don't cry, dear, he will soon be better, he is only stunned;" and, without a word or a look at the other two boys, he carried Robert

quickly into the kitchen, and laid him upon the table, telling Lucy, whom they met at the door, to fetch her mother.

He snatched up a cushion from an arm chair to put under the little boy's head, and then taking up a jug of water, sprinkled some in his face. Poor Ellen stood by, watching, but her legs trembled so she could scarcely stand, and she could hardly believe that the little pale boy on the table was her own dear brother Robert.

Her aunt, with Harriet and Lucy, came into the room, all looking very much frightened, but Mr. Buxton made a sign to them as they came in to be quiet, so they came up without speaking, and just then Robert opened his eyes. Ellen heard her uncle say "Thank God" in a low voice, and it seemed as if her own heart said so too. His uncle then bent down over Robert, and asked him tenderly if he was better, and if he felt hurt anywhere.

Robert answered dreamily, as if only half awake, "No, thank you, uncle, only I feel

very funny." He lay still for some minutes, and then said, raising himself, "Where's Peter? I want Peter."

"Never mind Peter, my dear," said his uncle, "lie still a little bit, and you will soon feel all right."

"No, Uncle," said Robert, laying his head down again, as if he were very tired, "I shall not feel all right till I have told Peter how sorry I am. Please, somebody, find Peter," he said, sitting up again, and they could not make him quiet till Lucy went off to find Peter. Her uncle then lifted Ellen up to sit upon the table by Robert, and told her to make him be a good boy and lie still, which she did, stroking his face and hands, and almost crying for joy to think that he was not killed.

"I do not know what it is all about," said Mr. Buxton aside to his wife, "but I'll be bound Dick is at the bottom of it, and I hope it will be a lesson to him, for he has had a terrible fright."

Lucy could not find Peter at first. She

called him and looked for him everywhere she could think of. At last she went into the stack-yard, and there, as she was passing a hay-rick that had been a good deal cut away, she heard something between a sigh and a groan, and looking up, she could see that Peter was lying full length on his face on a high ledge of the hay.

“Peter,” cried Lucy, “Peter, do come down; Robert wants you.” Peter was on his feet by her side in a moment.

“Oh, Miss Lucy, how is he?” he asked in a miserable voice.

“Why he is a great deal better, almost quite well,” said Lucy; “but he says he wants to tell you how sorry he is about something, I do not know what he means, only you must come quickly.”

“Oh no, Miss Lucy, I can’t,” said poor Peter; “I dare not face my master; what will he think of me? and it was only yesterday he told me I should do something terrible if I went in such passions. No, Miss Lucy, I dare not go in, indeed.”

Lucy was vexed with Peter. "Then I must tell Robert you won't come, must I? and then he will think you have not forgiven him for what he did," said she, with a little toss of her head, as she turned to leave him; but Peter followed, saying to himself, "I will go, I deserve it," and a minute or two after he came into the kitchen, and walked straight up to the table where Robert still lay, with his eyes shut and seemingly half asleep.

Peter's face was very pale, and he did not look at anyone but Robert, or seem to know that anyone else was in the room, as he stood there quite still. Nobody spoke till the little boy opened his eyes, and they rested upon Peter. "Oh, Peter, is that you?" he said, joyfully; "I am so sorry."

"Now," broke in Peter, "don't you be a saying that, Bob. I'm a brute, but I'll never strike no one again, that I won't."

"That is a very good resolution, Peter," said his master coming behind him, "and I hope God will give you strength to keep it; you have been mercifully spared doing any

great harm, I hope; but this should be a lesson to you all your life long. Now come with me a minute; I want to know how all this happened;" and he moved towards the door, Peter following him, but, before he reached it, Robert called him back. "Please, Uncle, send Peter away, and I will tell you the truth, indeed I will."

"I am sure you would, my boy," answered his uncle, "but so will Peter."

"But he does not know," said Robert, "please Uncle"—and seeing Robert looking very wistful, Mr. Buxton sent Peter away, and the other children also, and then came back to Robert.

"Now, Robert, tell me what made Peter strike you?"

"Why, uncle, I said '*coal-scuttle*,' to him," answered Robert, hanging his head.

"I thought it must be something of that kind; but you did not say it of your own head, did you?" asked his uncle.

"I would rather not say," answered Robert, shyly.

“Very well,” said his uncle, “you shall not. I see you are a brave boy, and would rather bear blame yourself than get others into trouble.”

Robert coloured up at his uncle’s praises, for he was not one who generally said much. Finding that the little boy did not seem to be hurt, his uncle told him he might go, but advised him to sit quietly in the arbour with the little girls for a bit instead of playing roughly.

Mr. Buxton then went to look for Dick, who he felt sure had been at the bottom of the trouble between Peter and Robert. He found him standing at a large old-fashioned window which was half-way up the staircase, catching the poor flies which were buzzing about there. He was not doing this for any pleasure it gave him; for Dick was not generally a cruel boy; but he was at that time glad to find anything to do to prevent him thinking about what had happened that morning. He knew he had done wrong in telling Robert to vex Peter, and his conscience

would not let him feel easy. It was a pity Dick was not more in the habit of listening to that little warning voice at the time he felt inclined to do the wrong thing, for he was often very sorry afterwards, when he found he had really hurt or injured any one by his thoughtless fun.

His father now took him up-stairs into his own room, and talked to him very seriously, showing him how wrong it was to try to make people really angry; as he knew that anything rude said of his kind old friend always did Peter, and pointing out to him how dreadful it would have been if Robert had been really killed (which was quite possible), and he had had to live all his life with the same feelings he had for those few moments when he had knelt beside his little cousin. His father felt quite sure from the changes in Dick's face, as he talked to him, that he really had felt very much at the time, so he did not say much more then; but told him that, as this was not the first time he had been in disgrace for this very fault, he must go to

bed for some hours to help him to remember not to do so again. Dick did not like going to bed at all, but he dared not disobey his father ; and while he is lying there feeling very dull, we will see what the rest of the party, who were in the harbour, were about.

CHAPTER VII.

VARIETIES.

ROBERT found Lucy and Ellen sitting on the ground, playing with their dolls, and chattering away to the two Miss Langfords, who had brought their work out into the arbour, to enjoy the beautiful fresh air. Just as Robert came up, the two little girls were begging for a story, and Miss Langford was saying, "Well, what shall it be about?"

"Oh!" cried Lucy, "about that great black dog you once told me about, please ma'am."

"What, poor Wallace. Very well. Wallace was a very large handsome black Newfoundland dog. Who knows what a Newfoundland dog is like?"

"I do, I do," cried all the three children. "He is curly all over," said one; "and has long ears," said another; "and barks very loud," said the third.

“Yes that is all quite right ; but there is another thing that he has, that you could not find out unless you could look quite close at his feet. Between his toes he has a skin stretched that helps him to swim in the water in the same way as the duck’s web-foot helps it to swim. You know Newfoundland dogs are very fond of going into the water, but Wallace did not live very near any water, so that he did not go in very often ; but when he did go to the canal, if Richard, the man who used to go about with him, threw a sod into the water, Wallace would dive straight down to the bottom, and bring it up again in his mouth. He was very fond of carrying a flat basket, like those that carpenters use for their tools, and one day he was going home from the town with Richard, carrying his basket in his mouth, and in it several bottles full of oil and other things. When they came to the bottom of a steep hill near home they heard a little dog squealing dreadfully, as if he was being hurt ; and, before Richard could stop him, off ran Wallace as hard as

he could go, up the hill ; Richard followed as quickly as he could, quite afraid he should find all the bottles in the basket broken, but before he reached the top of the hill, he met a large dog running away with his tail between his legs, and a minute or two after he came to a little crowd of people, who told him that a small pet dog, belonging to some ladies who were standing there, had been set upon by the large dog, and they were afraid he would have been killed, for they could not make the large dog loose his hold, when all of a sudden Wallace had come running up with his basket in his mouth. He walked to the wall close by, and put down the basket very carefully, and then he came and seized the great dog and shook him, and rolled him over, so that he was obliged to let the little dog go. Then Wallace sent him off, and came back to the little dog, and danced round him for joy ; and when Richard came up, he was standing with his basket ready to go on home, and all the people were patting and praising him."

“And had he broken the bottles when he ran so fast?” asked Robert.

“No, not one; Richard was quite surprised to find that they were not even cracked.”

“Oh, what a nice dog,” said Ellen. “Is he alive now, ma’am?”

“No, he lived to be very old, and then, one day he was taken so ill we were obliged to have him killed.”

“Oh, how very sad; I do not think I could have had him killed,” said Lucy.

“Yes, I think you would, Lucy,” answered Miss Langford, “if you had felt quite sure that he would never have been any better, and would only have been in pain as long as he lived. We were very sorry indeed, but we thought it was right to have it done, as he could not be cured.”

“Poor Wallace,” said Robert; “can you tell us another story about him, ma’am?”

“Yes, I dare say I can, there was no end to the clever things he used to do. Richard had taught him to go back by himself to fetch things that had been hidden. He used

to stick his pocket handkerchief into a hedge without Wallace seeing him, and then, when he had gone on some way, he used to say, 'Go back and fetch it,' and off Wallace would start back again along the road they had come, and very soon would catch Richard again with the handkerchief in his mouth."

"But how did he find it?" asked Lucy and Ellen in a breath.

"I suppose by his smell," said Miss Langford; "I do not know any other way; and it is wonderful what dogs will find out in that way. Wallace knew the smell of anything that had been in Richard's hands or pockets, and so that told him where the handkerchief was. A very funny mistake happened once from this trick of Wallace's. It was in very hot weather, and Richard was leading him by a string, as you know people are ordered to do in very hot weather. One day, as they came home, Richard stopped at a shop where they sold besoms, and taking one up in his hand, asked the price of it, the

man at the shop told him, but he did not buy it, but laid it down again and went on. Now as Wallace disliked the string and strap round his nose very much, Richard often took them off when they reached home, directly he was inside the garden gate, and without waiting to shut it; and that day, the minute the string was off, away darted Wallace out of the gate again. Richard knew he would soon come back, so he did not go after him, and in a little while in walked Mr. Wallace at the gate again, with the very besom in his mouth that Richard had taken up in his hand. When Richard took it back to the shop, the man told him that the dog had come running back, and picked up the besom, and gone off again, and they did not try to stop him, because they knew what a clever dog he was, and they thought Richard had sent him for it, and meant to pay them some other time."

The children all laughed at the notion of Wallace stealing the besom so boldly, and Robert asked whether if he could get a

black puppy it would grow up as clever as Wallace.

"I do not know, Robert," said Miss Langford, "all dogs are not equally clever; you might have a very stupid black dog, I am afraid."

"But a Newfoundland dog?" asked Robert.

"I am afraid a great many Newfoundland dogs are not as clever as Wallace, but it is easier to teach them than other kinds of dogs. I believe there is as much difference between dogs as there is between children, as to what they can learn. I dare say, Robert, you do some of your lessons at school better than Ellen, and she does some others better than you."

"Yes, ma'am," said Ellen, "Robert can do sums a great deal better than I do."

"And Ellen writes better than I do," said Robert.

"Yes, and Lucy can sew much the best," added Ellen.

"I think it is much the same with diffe-

rent dogs," said Miss Langford ; " but some kinds of dogs are always easier to teach than other kinds. Who can tell me whether there are different kinds of children ?"

" Oh, yes, ma'am," said Ellen, eagerly ; " I saw a little brown girl once, and she was not a bit like me, and I could not understand what she said a bit ; and one day Mother showed me a black negro woman, and there was a little boy with her, and he was—oh, so funny-looking ; and the hair on his head was all like black wool. I am sure I am glad I am not like those black negroes."

When Ellen stopped, Miss Langford said : " Yes, Ellen, I know there are different-coloured people ; but both these little children were like you in laughing when they were merry, and crying when they were sorry ; and do you not think that they loved their black and brown mothers as you do your white mother."

" I don't know, ma'am," said Ellen, thinking to herself that she did not believe any

other children loved their mother as she did hers.

“Then I can tell you,” said Miss Langford. “Those black people love each other just as we do; and they are many of them very good, and love God very much, and are very patient in bearing a great deal of ill-treatment, for in America there are a great many of them who are obliged to work very hard all day long in the burning hot sun, without ever earning any money by all they do.”

“What a shame!” cried Lucy. “I would not stay; I would run away.”

“Sometimes they do run away; and when you are a little older you will like to read a book called ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ about a woman running away to save her dear little boy being taken away from her and sold for money to a cruel man, who wanted to have him for a slave. Almost all the slaves who run away go out of the country where the people live who are so cruel to them, into a country close by, that belongs to our Queen,

and the minute they have passed into that country they are quite free, and nobody can make them work unless they like, and they can get money just like any one else."

"Oh, that is capital," said Lucy, "I wonder any black men stay with their cruel masters."

"All their masters are not cruel; some of them are very kind; but they all think that it is not wrong to sell men and women, as we do cows and sheep; so that often causes a great deal of unhappiness, because, if a woman has several children, and her master does not want them all, he sells one away to one person, and another to another."

"Oh, dear; oh, dear; I am glad I do not live in that country," exclaimed Ellen. "Only think, if they were to sell me, and send me away from Mother and little Tommy!"

When Lucy heard Ellen name Tommy, she jumped up from the ground in such a hurry that she almost upset Ellen, saying, "Oh, what shall I do? I left Phil in the

yard, and I do not know where he is ;” and poor Lucy looked so miserable that they all felt quite sorry for her, and the two ladies proposed that they should all go and look for little Phil.

“ But run first, Lucy, and see if he is with your mother,” said Miss Langford.

But Lucy stood still, and then said, very low, “ Mother will be so angry.”

“ Yes,” replied Miss Langford, “ of course she will not be pleased ; but you must not mind that, when you know you have done wrong.” But still Lucy did not stir.

“ Come along, Lucy, I’ll go with you to Aunt,” cried Ellen, who was quite vexed and surprised to see her cousin waiting, instead of going to find her little brother ; and, taking hold of Lucy, she dragged her off towards the house. At first they could not find Mrs. Buxton ; but at length they found her in one of the rooms at the top of the house, making space for the wool that had lately been shorn off the backs of the sheep.

Lucy trembled so when she got into the

room that Ellen was obliged to speak for her.

“Please, Aunt, is Phil here?” said she, in as quiet a tone as she could; but she felt her heart thumping very hard as she said it.

“No, child,” answered her aunt, in a busy tone; and then, struck by something in the little girls’ manner, she turned round to look at them, and, seeing the scared look on both their faces, she said to Lucy, “Why, I told you to take care of him after breakfast, and now—if you have gone and left him again——”

“Oh, please, Aunt, do not scold Lucy, she is so unhappy,” said Ellen. “We shall soon find him, I dare say. Come, Lucy.” And she started off downstairs again, thinking where she could go to look for the little boy. Poor Lucy followed very slowly, for her legs shook so that she could hardly walk; and before they were downstairs they heard Mrs. Buxton hurrying down after them.

They met the other children in the kitchen. They said they had looked all over the house, but had not found the child, so they all

separated to hunt for him in different places, and "Phil! Phil!" sometimes in a woman's voice, and sometimes in a child's, might be heard all round the house and yard for the next half-hour; but no little Phil either answered or showed himself. Poor Mrs. Buxton grew very miserable, and, sitting down on a bench by the kitchen door, she began to cry sadly. Little Lucy, who felt as if her heart would break, could not bear to see this, and she ran up to her mother, saying, "Oh, don't cry so, Mother; I will find him."

Mrs. Buxton, who, as I told you, was rather a hasty-tempered woman, forgot at that minute that her little girl was as sorry as herself about the loss of her little brother, and only answered, "Yes, you had better, or you shall never look *me* in the face again, I can tell you."

Lucy thought she had been as miserable as she could be before, but when she heard her mother speak those words she felt still worse; she stood still a minute but she did

not cry, she felt as if she should be choked, and could not get her breath for a minute or two; then she suddenly started off to the yard gate, where she saw her brother Ned just coming in. Ned and Lucy were great friends, and he saw directly that something was the matter, and asked what it was, which Lucy told him in a few broken words.

“Oh, well, wait a moment, and I will come and find him for you, but I must go and feed Smiler first;” and he turned into the stable with the cart-horse he was leading. Lucy followed and leaned against the stable door, looking the very picture of woe, while her brother fastened up Smiler, and then went up into the hay-loft to get some more food for him. The minute he was up, Lucy heard him say, “The little rascal!” and then she saw Ned’s face peeping down at the top of the ladder, looking very merry, which she thought rather strange.

“Can you come up, Lucy?” said Ned, in a low voice.

“Oh, yes,” answered Lucy, “but not

now, Ned, I want to go and look for Phil."

"Well, you need not look far, if you will come up here," said Ned, in the same voice.

"What *do* you mean, Ned," cried Lucy, mounting the ladder as fast as she could.

"Why, look there," said Ned, helping her up the last step, and then pointing to one corner of the hay-loft, where, fast asleep upon the hay, lay Phil, with one fat kitten in his arms, and another lying asleep close by.

Poor Lucy could not help crying then, but it was for joy, as she knelt down by her dear little brother and kissed his rosy cheek as she whispered, "Oh Phil! Phil! how could you frighten us so?"

The little boy opened his eyes when he felt her soft kiss on his cheek, and held out his arms to her directly, as he was accustomed to do, when she went to take him up from his usual sleep on the bed. Lucy snatched him up and began to smother him with kisses, when she suddenly remembered her mother, and begging Ned to carry Phil



"One fat kitten in his arms, and another lying asleep close by."



down the ladder, she went down herself, and then ran across the yard, shouting out, "I have found him, I have found him!"

Mrs. Buxton had been sitting just where Lucy had left her, but now she started up, and all the others came running from different sides, all calling out "Where? Where?" till there was quite a little crowd round Lucy and Ned, who had come up by this time with little Phil, who was laughing and kicking in his brother's arms, wanting to be set down on his own legs, and little thinking what sad trouble they had all been in about him. His mother took him in her arms, and went back to the bench, where she sat looking at him as if she could not take her eyes off him; and Lucy saw, from the change in her face, how frightened she had really been. Lucy stole round to her mother's side, and putting her hand on her arm said, softly, "Please to forgive me mother, I am *so* sorry."

"Oh, yes, I forgive you, dear," said her mother, giving her a hearty kiss; "and I

spoke too sharp just now, but it seemed as if something bad was to happen to-day, what with Robert first, and then thinking poor little Phil had got into trouble, I was almost wild; but is it not wonderful to think how the child managed to get up into that loft?"

After a little talk about Phil contriving to climb the ladder all by himself, Mrs. Buxton, as usual, was too busy to stay longer; so, thanking the Miss Langfords for their kindness in helping in the search, she turned into the house, sending the children off for a game of play in the stock-yard; to which Lucy went with a light heart, for her mother's few last kind words had made her quite forget those which had made her so wretched before.

"Oh dear," cried Robert, "I do so want Dick, where can he be?"

"I'm afraid father won't let him come out before dinner," answered Lucy, sadly; "for I saw him up at his window just now, and if he is up there, it is one of father's worst punishments."

“Oh, don’t you think he will if I ask him?”

“No, I am sure he won’t,” said Lucy, “it is of no use your trying, Bob; but look, there is Willy under the tree, with one of those everlasting books. Do let us make him come and play with us; he will, sometimes, and then it is capital fun.”

Robert did not like to give up without trying to have Dick set free, but he remembered something in his uncle’s face that morning which made him feel that Lucy was right; so, after waiting a moment, he joined the others, who had run off to William Buxton, who though not much older than Dick and Robert, was so fond of reading and study, that he seemed much older, and did not often join in the rough play which was the chief delight of the two other boys. Now, however, he good-naturedly put aside his book and joined in a game among the stacks. They played at hide-and-seek till they were all hot and tired, and then they sat down to cool themselves, and Ellen

asked Willy why some of the stacks looked such a different colour from the others. To which he answered: "Why, because some are corn stacks, and some hay ricks, to be sure. Don't you know the difference?"

"No," said Ellen. "What is it?"

"Why, corn stacks are made of corn, and hay ricks of dry grass. Horses eat the hay ricks, and men eat the corn stacks. Now do you understand?" asked her cousin, who, having lived in the country all his life, did not know how puzzling some things that were quite common to him were to his town cousins.

"Now, Willy, you are laughing at me," answered Ellen; "I am sure men cannot eat that rough pricking straw that I scratched my face against just now."

"They do not actually eat the straw but they eat the corn off the top of it," said William. "Come with me and I will show you the difference between corn and grass, for I am sure it is time you knew it."

Ellen and Robert did not quite like William's way of telling them things. He had rather a conceited manner; but they thought him wonderfully clever, and therefore listened humbly to what he said; and when he did explain anything, he did it very clearly and well. He now took them to a hay rick, and made them pull out a handful and look at it; and they found that it was all very much alike, made up of short dry bits of grass and clover, all gone to a sort of greenish grey colour. Then they went to the corn stack, and Willy told them each to pull out two or three straws, which they saw were much thicker than the bits of hay. Some of the straws broke, but Robert got hold of one which kept coming out longer and longer, till at last the little bunch at the end, which Willy told them was called the ear of corn, came out, and he showed them the separate grains each in its small dry yellow leaf or husk, and told them those grains were what flour was made of. Ellen would hardly believe him, till she had bitten a grain and

found how white it was inside, and how much like flour it tasted.

William showed them how in building a corn stack all the ears of corn were turned into the middle so as to keep them dry, and then he took them to the barn to see where the little grains were knocked out of their husks, either by men threshing the straw with long double sticks called flails, or else by a machine; but there was not anyone at that kind of work just then.

Willy had now become quite interested in showing his little town cousins all about the hay and corn, and he asked Ellen if she should like to see the difference when they were growing in the fields. Ellen said she should very much, so he took them down the lane a little way towards a field in which the children had noticed that the grass was very long some days before. At the gate their uncle was standing talking to two or three rather curious looking men, Ellen thought, dressed in long grey coats, and with very high shirt collars, each of

whom had a long scythe hanging over his shoulders.

"Oh, Willy," she said, coming very close up to her cousin, "who are those strange looking men talking to Uncle?"

"Those are the Irish haymakers," answered Willy, laughing. "You need not be afraid of them, so that you keep out of the way of their scythes. To-morrow you will see how cleverly they manage not to cut each others legs off."

Neither Ellen nor Robert knew what this last speech meant, but they did not say so, thinking they would see next day. Willy now showed them how the hay was made up of a great many different kinds of grass, some long and some short, and then he took them across the lane to look at a corn field, when they saw that each plant of corn was just like all the rest, and he showed them the ears of corn still quite green, and the little grains, which they had seen so hard in the ripe corn, quite soft, and tasting so sweet, that Ellen declared she wished they were

always like that, till Robert reminded her that if they were they could not be made into bread.

“How nice and neat the corn looks,” said Ellen; “why is it so much neater than the hay?”

“Because the grass grows all over the ground,” said Willy, “but the corn only comes where we put the seed in, each plant of corn comes from one grain; and, just look, Ellen, what a number of grains come from one,” he added, pointing to a bunch which had several ears upon it.

“Is that what it means in the Bible when it says some brought forth an hundred-fold?” asked Ellen.

“Yes; I remember asking father that very question when I was a little boy,” said William. Here the great bell at the house rang for dinner, so they scampered home, and the morning that had begun so dismally ended happily enough, except that when the children sat down to dinner they missed Dick’s merry face. Mr. Buxton took the

boy's dinner up to him himself, and told him he might get up and come down-stairs when he had finished it, which Dick was very glad to do, for he was heartily tired of being by himself. But he looked rather ashamed when he came down among the others again, and we will hope that he remembered the lesson his father wished to teach him.

CHAPTER VIII.

SELF-DENIAL.—HOME.

THE next few days were very merry ones, spent by the children in the hay field, and Robert and Ellen were perfectly happy, except that they were beginning to think it was a long time since they had seen their father and mother, and Ellen longed to have little Tommy to tumble about in the hay, for, though the hay-makers did not let them play about just wherever they liked, because that would have delayed them in their work, Mr. Buxton gave orders that the children might have one hay-cock all to themselves, and fine fun they had with it. They covered each other up in it, and made a great nest, into which they all got, and a great deal more that I cannot stop to tell about; but at last the men wanted to put the hay into the cart, so the children helped to gather it up, and then the little girls and Phil rode back to the

farm-house on the top of the beautiful fresh hay, which they enjoyed extremely.

They were very much surprised to find Uncle George at the farm when they got back, and Robert and Ellen were soon asking him all sorts of questions, especially whether he had seen their mother and father lately, and how they were. He told them they were pretty well, and that their mother said it was time they came home again, at which they looked rather grave, though, as I said before, they had begun to long a little for home. Robert was afraid they might have to go back with their uncle that very evening, and asked if it were so, to which Uncle George answered, "No, my boy, not to-night; but next market-day I shall be going down the line again, and if your aunt will bring you to Tradly, I will take charge of you home. Your mother says it is time you were going to school again, she is afraid you will be falling back in your learning."

"Well, George," said Mrs. Buxton, "if that is it, I suppose we must let them go,

but we should have been very glad to have kept them a bit longer; but our children's holidays are just coming to an end, so they would have missed their companions anyhow. They've been very good children, and I am sure they will be welcome here again, and so you may tell sister when you see her."

Ellen and Robert looked at each other with pleased faces when they heard their aunt say that they had been good children, but they all felt a little sad at the thought of parting—Lucy particularly, who was a very warm-hearted little girl, seemed almost ready to cry, and she and Ellen walked out gravely into the garden, with their arms round one another's necks, and had a long talk about how they should think of and write letters to one another. "Oh, dear me!" cried Lucy, "I wish I could write better. I really will try now, because then I can write letters to you, Nelly."

"Oh yes, do," said Ellen; "but cannot you write, Lucy?"

Lucy hung her head. "Not small hand, Nelly, only round hand, and you know that fills up a letter directly; but perhaps I shall come and see you some day, don't you think I shall?"

Ellen sighed as she answered, "I do not know, Lucy; I should like it very much, but I don't know——"

"What do you mean, Ellen? should you not like me to come?" asked Lucy.

"Yes," said Ellen; "but I meant that I do not know where you could sleep, and—and I am afraid, Lucy, you would not like our house, it is so small, and sometimes we don't have any dinner at all, but only bread and dripping."

Lucy's eyes opened wider and wider as Ellen said this. She knew that her uncle and aunt were not so well off as her father and mother, but she had never understood that her dear little cousin was really so poor that she did not always have food enough, which seemed a most terrible thing to her.

"Oh, then, Ellen, you shall not go back;

stay here always, and you shall have just the same as I do."

"Oh, no, thank you, dear," answered Ellen; "indeed, though I have been very happy here, I quite long to go home to see my own dear mother and little Tommy, but it is very kind of you, Lucy, to say so."

Lucy was silent for a few minutes, and then she said—"What a pity it seems that some people have more than they want, and other people have not enough."

"Yes," said Ellen, "I used to be very cross sometimes when I saw the smart little girls in the streets, and I asked mother if it did not make her angry when she saw the ladies all dressed so fine, and what do you think she said? She said she hoped the ladies were thankful for what God had given them, and she was thankful for what He gave her, and that was all she thought about it."

"Then I think Aunt Hannah must be a very good woman," said Lucy.

"Of course she is," answered Ellen. "I

believe she is the best woman in the world, but she never likes to hear anyone say she is good, and she never seems to like to hear us speaking as if we were proud about anything. Oh, but Lucy, I think you must come and see us, if it is only for you to know Mother!"

"We shall see," said Lucy; "but perhaps she will come and stay here with you some day."

"Oh, that would be delicious, and Father, too, that would be best of all," exclaimed Ellen; and they went into the house full of this charming idea.

When the Miss Langfords heard that Robert and Ellen were going away the next week, they asked Mr. Buxton if he would let Ned drive them into Tradly some day and if the two children might go with them; and it was arranged that they should do so the next day but one.

Robert and Ellen wondered very much what the Miss Langfords could want them for, and they were ready and waiting some

time before the hour the ladies had fixed. At last they started, and on the way Miss Langford told them a great deal about the different kinds of crops that they saw growing in the fields along the road, and once, when they passed a field of beans, they were quite delighted with the sweet smell from the blossoms. Ned asked the ladies where he should drive to, and they said that if he would put them down before they got into the town, they need not keep him, but would walk back and bring the children with them. So they all got out, and the Miss Langfords went on to a shop in the market-place, where Ellen thought they seemed to sell all sorts of things.

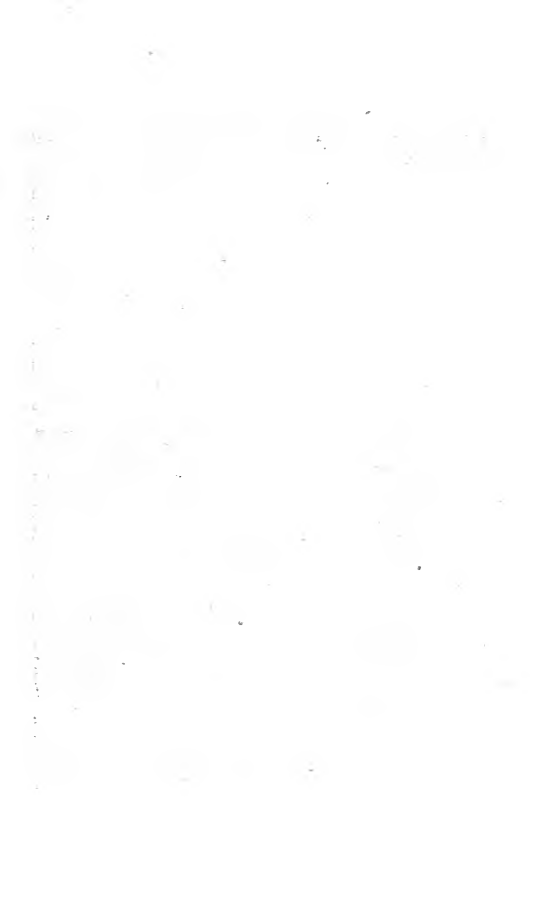
Here Miss Langford stopped, and said in a low voice to Ellen, "I have heard about a little girl who would very much like a hat; do you know one?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Ellen, looking up with a very bright smile.

"Well, come in, then, and see if we can find one that will fit you."



THE SHOP IN THE MARKET-PLACE.



Ellen did not speak again. She felt shy in the shop, but she was delighted to think of having a hat at last. They tried several on her, and at last they found a neat brown hat that fitted exactly. Ellen heard Miss Langford say to the shopwoman, "Very well, I will take that hat," but she had been standing for the last few minutes with her eyes fixed upon a very pretty purple-white ribbon in the window, and she now turned round to Miss Langford with a very red and eager face, and said, "Oh, thank you, ma'am, but——"

"Why, Ellen," said the lady, smiling, "what is the meaning of that long *but*?" Ellen hung down her head, but did not speak.

"What is it, my dear?" said Miss Langford, kindly; "is there anything else you would like better?"

"Oh, no, ma'am, thank you, but if——" and she went close up to Miss Langford, and spoke very low—"if you would be so kind as to let me have that ribbon for mother,

instead of the hat, I should be so very much obliged to you."

"What is the price of that ribbon in the window?" asked Miss Langford.

"Tenpence a yard, ma'am," answered the shop-woman.

"Then cut me off four yards of it," said the young lady, "and we will have that instead of the hat."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am," exclaimed Ellen, joyfully, and her little face looked as happy as any little face could.

"Will you not allow me to say both, ma'am?" asked the shop-woman; and Ellen listened eagerly for the answer, and could not help feeling the least little bit disappointed when she heard Miss Langford say, "No, only the ribbon, if you please;" but she thought again of the joy of giving her mother the ribbon, so she tried to think no more about the hat.

Miss Susan Langford then asked Robert if there was anything he would like? Now Robert, as we found at the beginning of our

story, was not always so ready to think of others as Ellen was ; but now, when he felt what a pleasure Ellen would have in taking home a pretty present to her mother, he began to think that he should like that too, though there were a great many things in the shop he would have liked very much indeed for himself.

While he had stood there waiting, he had looked across the street and seen a bookseller's shop opposite, which reminded him how often he had heard his father say he wished he had a book about gardening, and then he would try and get one of the gardens that were just out of the town, only it was no use his having one now, as he knew nothing at all about it, having worked in a factory ever since he was a boy. So, when Miss Susan asked Robert what he would like, he answered directly, "A book about gardening, for Father, please ma'am."

"Very well, then, we must cross to the book shop," said the young lady ; where they soon found just the right sort of book,

with which Robert was as happy as Ellen was with her ribbon; and they walked home again, chattering to each other very happily as they went, of what pleasure they would have in telling those at home all about their happy visit.

But now we must see what Lucy was about while her cousins were gone to Tradly. She had seemed in a great hurry for them to be ready, and directly they were gone, she went to her mother and said eagerly :

“Oh, Mother, will you please come upstairs into our room. Harriet and I have been turning out all our things, and we want you to come and see if we may not give some to Ellen; for, Mother,” and the little girl’s voice grew very sad, “it makes me quite unhappy to think that, sometimes, Ellen has not any dinner at home, and if she can have some of my clothes, Aunt will have more money to buy food with.”

“Yes, dear, I’ll come,” said her mother. “It is a very good thought of yours and

Harriet's. And they were soon all three busy choosing out what things could be made to do for Ellen, and Mrs. Buxton also looked out some clothes of the boys for Robert, and some of little Phil's, which would do for Tommy; but they all agreed that they would say nothing to the cousins about it till they were going away. Harriet begged to be allowed to clean up and trim an old hat of Lucy's, which her mother thought could be done nothing with; but she said Harriet might try, if she liked to take the trouble, and Harriet, who was anxious to make up to Ellen for her former unkindness, resolved to do her best. They put the things all away before Ellen and Robert came back, and Harriet worked every evening, to get the things into good order, and she took so much pains with the hat, that she made it look very nice indeed.

Lucy was curious to know what her cousins would bring back from Tradly, and so was Dick. They were both rather surprised when they saw the ribbon and the

book; but Lucy understood in a minute what a pleasure it would be to Ellen to take her mother the ribbon, and when she heard Miss Langford telling Mrs. Buxton about Ellen refusing the hat in the shop, she clapped her hands, and ran off to tell Harriet, who was doubly glad she had determined to take pains with the old hat.

At last, the day came when they were to go home, and they went all round the farm to say good-bye to their favourite animals, and to the places where they had had such merry games. And then Lucy came to Ellen with an odd look on her face, Ellen thought—for she was feeling rather sad at going away, and she would have liked Lucy to be sad too; but instead of that, she looked as if she could hardly keep from smiling every minute, as she said:

“Now, Ellen, dear, Mother says you must come and put up your things.”

“Oh, dear,” said Ellen, “must we? it

will not take more than a minute or two to tie up the bundles."

"But Mother says your things had better all go in a basket that she is sending to aunt; it is in our room; so come, Nelly."

"Very well," sighed Nelly, following Lucy slowly up-stairs to their bed-room. At the door, however, which stood open, Lucy stopped and let Ellen pass her. The little girl looked first at the large bed, which seemed covered with clothes, and then at Harriet, who was on her knees before a large basket into which she was putting one thing after another.

"What are you doing, Harriet?" she cried. "Those things are not ours."

"Yes they are," said Harriet, kindly. "They are a few things we thought might do for you"—but Ellen interrupted her——

"And that pretty hat? Am I to have that hat?"

"Yes," cried Lucy, jumping about her. "Yes; you are to have that hat, and you are always to think of Harriet when you put

it on, for she has taken such pains to do it for you."

"That I will," said Ellen, "and thank you very much, Harriet; and is that little frock for Tommy? Oh, how rich we shall be!"

The basket was soon packed, and several kind presents put in for the father and mother and brothers at home, and, just in time, Ellen remembered the little plant of musk that she was to ask her aunt to let her have out of the garden; but, as the trap was already at the door, they had only time to dig a bit up and put it with some earth into a piece of paper, for Ellen to carry in her hand.

Mrs. Buxton went with them, but there was everybody else to say good-bye to, and the Miss Langfords and all the rest were collected at the door to see them off. There was a great deal of kissing and shaking of hands, and then their uncle put them both into the trap, laughing as he did so, and saying he wondered how much heavier they

were than when they came; and, indeed, they did not look like the same children.

We need not describe the journey. Uncle George met them at Tradly; they said good-bye to their kind aunt, and thanked her for their happy visit; and then the noisy, puffing engine soon took them back to the station from which they had started when they left home.

“There’s Mother, and Tommy, and Baby,” cried Ellen, as the train stopped. Their mother came to the door of their carriage as they got out, and in another minute the two children were kissing her, and Tommy, and the Baby, who looked a great deal better than when they went away.

“Come, come,” said Uncle George, “you are stopping up the way, you must save the rest of your kisses till you get home; look here, this porter wants to bring the luggage along; and they all had to run back out of the porter’s way. Seeing the luggage, reminded Robert of the basket, and he asked Uncle George if he was quite sure it was

safe, and how ever they were to get it home.

“Oh, I’ll bring it along to-night,” said the kind uncle.

The children thought that would be a long time to wait, but as he said he could not come till he had done his work, they were obliged to wait as patiently as they could.

When they reached home, Ellen gave her mother the little plant of musk, and it pleased Mrs. Cooper very much to think that her little girl had remembered how sorry she had been when she lost her old one, and had thought of bringing her another.

Ellen and Robert could not help thinking that the streets looked very black, and the people pale and dirty, after the fresh country faces they had been seeing lately. The house, too, looked smaller than they thought it was, but still it was home, and they were very much pleased to see all the old places again, and to stroke the old cat, and speak to the neighbours’ children with whom they used to play. Ellen was delighted to nurse

Baby, and wondered how it was that she had not always been thinking of her while she was away. I think it was that Ellen had been a little tired of Baby before she left home; but now, when she felt quite fresh and strong, she seemed the nicest plaything that could be had.

They had so much to do and say that the time did not seem long to wait for the basket, and their mother had made haste in the morning and finished her work, so that she could sit down and talk to them quietly. In the middle of some long history of Ellen's, their father and brothers came home from work, and she stopped to run and meet them.

"Why, dear me," said Mr. Cooper, sitting down on a chair near the door, "who have we here? What little boy and girl are you? I do not think you can be my two thin, pale little children who went away a month ago."

"Oh yes we are! Yes we are," cried Ellen and Robert, laughing, as their father looked funnily from one to the other, pre-

tending to be finding out if they were really his children or not.

“Well, I’m sure you don’t look like the same, do they, wife?” he went on, jumping one up on to each knee. “They look just like two country children all over. I’m sure Tradly must be a fine place.”

“Yes, indeed,” said his wife. “I wonder if you and I were to go, Father, we should come back with such red cheeks.”

“Oh, you are to go some time; Aunt said so,” cried Ellen; “and then I shall be a big girl and stay and mind the house.”

They had a great deal more talk, and then came Uncle George with the basket, which Ellen would insist must be unpacked directly, because she knew that some of the things her aunt had put in were eatables. So they set to work to undo it, and a great deal of pleasure everything gave. When Mrs. Cooper came to the hat she looked very pleased, and said, “Well, Nelly, I am glad you’ve got a hat at last.”

“Thank you, Mother,” answered Ellen, as

she made a sudden rush into the basket, and picked out two small parcels, one of which she gave to Robert, while she thrust the other into her mother's hand.

“What is this, Ellen?” said she.

“It is something for you, Mother, all for yourself,” said Ellen.

“Well, what can it be,” said Mrs. Cooper. unwrapping it—slowly, as Ellen thought?

“Why, I declare, it is a beautiful bonnet-ribbon!”

“Whose present is this?”

“Mine,” whispered Ellen; and her mother passed her arm round her and gave her such a kiss, that Ellen saw she quite understood all about it, and she felt happier than if she had had the smartest hat in the world. Mr. Cooper was very much pleased, too, with Robert's present of the book, and altogether the basket was the most charming basket that ever was seen. All the clothes were looked at, and arranged to come in for somebody, and at the bottom there were half a cheese, some bacon, and some eggs

and butter, carefully packed in a tin box, which pleased Mrs. Cooper very much.

We must now say good-bye to Robert and Ellen, and their friends will be glad to hear that the same basket came and went very often between Mrs. Buxton's and Mrs. Cooper's: going back to the farm empty, and always returning full of food, or of good useful clothing, so that Mrs. Cooper never felt so poor again after her children's visit to Ashfield Farm.

THE END.

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